

The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Marine Reserves Environmental Review Process

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) is considering the establishment of a network of marine reserves within the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS or Sanctuary) to complement the recently established State marine protected areas (MPAs).

The purpose of this process is to determine the best action to protect, maintain and restore the natural biological communities of the Sanctuary and to enhance its natural habitats, populations, and ecological processes.

The NMSP will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) that will examine a range of management and regulatory alternatives associated with consideration of marine reserves. The EIS will build on the State's environmental review documents prepared for the State established MPAs in the Sanctuary.



Arch Rock at Anacapa Island. Photographer: Todd Jacobs.

Community Consensus Statement Marine Reserves Working Group

February 2000

"The urbanization of southern California has significantly increased the number of people visiting the coastal zone and using its resources. This has increased human demands on the ocean, including commercial and recreational fishing, as well as wildlife viewing and other activities. A burgeoning coastal population has also greatly increased the use of our coastal waters as receiving areas for human, industrial, and agricultural wastes. In addition, new technologies have increased the efficiency, effectiveness, and yield of sport and commercial fisheries. Concurrently, there have been wide scale natural phenomena such as El Niño weather patterns, oceanographic regime shifts, and dramatic fluctuations in pinpoint populations.

In recognizing the scarcity of many marine organisms relative to past abundance, any of the above factors could play a role. Everyone concerned desires to better understand the effects of the individual factors and their interaction, to reverse or stop trends of resource decline, and to restore the integrity and resilience of impaired ecosystems.

To protect, maintain, restore, and enhance living marine resources, it is necessary to develop new management strategies that encompass an ecosystem perspective and promote collaboration between competing interests. One strategy is to develop reserves where all harvest is prohibited. Reserves provide a precautionary measure against the possible impacts of an expanding human population and management uncertainties, offer education and research opportunities, and provide reference areas to measure non-harvesting impacts."



California's Channel Islands. Photographer: Bill Devery.

Channel Islands Marine Reserves Process

Since 1999, the Sanctuary and the California Department of Fish and Game have worked together to consider marine reserves in the Sanctuary. This process stems from our shared concern for protecting and sustaining marine resources.

The process has included extensive community involvement, supported by the best available ecological and economic data.

On October 23, 2002, the California Fish and Game Commission established a network of marine protected areas within the State waters of the Sanctuary [See map]. This network went into effect on April 9, 2003.

The NMSP is now initiating a federal process to consider marine reserves within the Sanctuary to complement the State's action. Continued community involvement is important.



Giant Kelp. Photographer: Anneke Crandley.



California Brown Pelicans. Photographer: Ralph A. Cotringer.

Public Scoping Meetings

Three public scoping meetings were held in June and July 2003 in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties to discuss marine reserves. The NMSP holds public meetings to "scope out" or get input from resource users, interest groups, government agencies and other members of the public. Scoping meetings are not decision making meetings. The input from scoping meetings will help define the range of issues that the NMSP must address in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Sanctuary also is revising its Management Plan in a separate, but parallel, environmental review process.

TIMELINE

June-July 2003

- Public scoping meetings / Information gathering

July-November 2003

- Sanctuary develops Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including alternatives with ecological and economic data/analysis

Winter 2003-2004

- Draft Environmental Impact Statement released
- Public Review of Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Spring/Summer 2004

- Sanctuary prepares responses to comments
- Final Environmental Impact Statement drafted

Fall/Winter 2004

- Final Environmental Impact Statement released

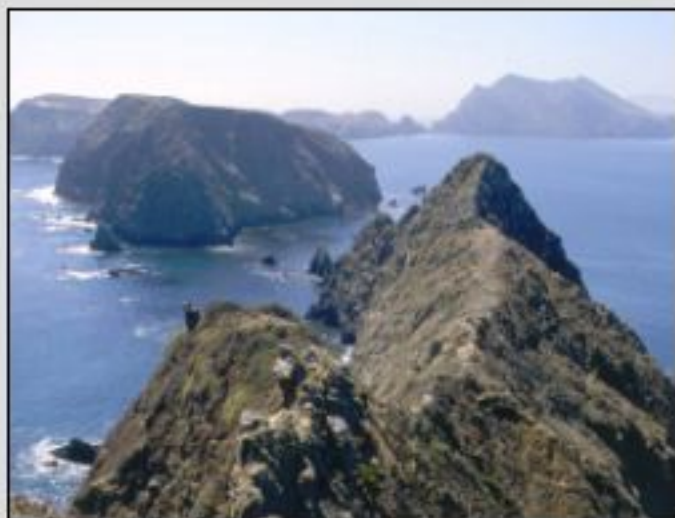
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Anacapa Island. Photographer: Laura Francis.

The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary was designated in September 1980, and consists of the marine habitats surrounding San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa and Santa Barbara Islands, approximately 25 miles off the coast of Santa Barbara, California. The sanctuary is an area of national significance because of its exceptional natural beauty and marine and cultural resources. The NMSP is considering the establishment of a network of marine reserves to protect, maintain and restore the natural biological communities and to enhance natural habitats, populations, and ecological processes in the Sanctuary.



California sea lions. Photographer: Patrick Conlin.

Internet Resources

Channel Islands Marine Reserves Process

www.cinms.nos.noaa.gov/marineres/main.html

State Environmental Documents

www.dfg.ca.gov/mud/channel_islands/

*Public comments will be available
for public review at the Sanctuary.*



Great Spotted Sea. Photographer: CIMS Library.